

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method of providing online presence information:
2 maintaining a list of people known to a user;
3 accessing online presence information for the user;
4 determining a potential receiver of the online presence information;
5 comparing the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the potential
6 receiver is included on the list; and
7 determining whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential
8 receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining to not communicate
3 the online presence information to the potential receiver when the potential receiver is not
4 included in the list.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to
3 communicate the online presence information to an instant messaging application of the
4 potential receiver.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display
3 the online presence information on a web page.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display
3 the online presence information in member search results.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to display
3 the online presence information in a member profile.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to
3 communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver when a request for
4 online presence information is received from the potential receiver.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein determining whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver comprises determining whether to
3 communicate the online presence information to the potential receiver absent a request
4 from the potential receiver for the online presence information.

1 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 inferring that a person is known to the user based on positive user actions related to e-
3 mail communications from the person;
4 adding the inferred person to the list.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include sending an e-mail to the
2 person.

1 11. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include replying to, forwarding,
2 saving, or printing an e-mail received from the person.

1 12. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive actions include moving an e-mail from a
2 first folder to a second folder.

1 13. The method of claim 12 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second
2 folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

1 14. The method of claim 9 wherein the positive action includes leaving an e-mail from
2 the person open for a predetermined period of time.

1 15. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 inferring that a person is known to the user based, at least in part, on detecting a

3 communication between the user and the person;
4 adding the inferred person to the list.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the communication is an instant messaging
2 communication.

1 17. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is known to the
2 user, wherein inferring comprises:
3 accessing a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact
4 list; and
5 accessing a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first
6 contact's contact list.

1 18. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is known to the user
2 based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that
3 otherwise are used to infer a person is known to the user.

1 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 report a communication from the person as spam.

1 20. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 add a person to a blacklist.

1 21. The method of claim 18 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 move a communication from the person to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

1 22. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 enabling the user to expressly designate a person as known to the user; and
3 adding the designated person to the list.

1 23. A computer-usable medium having a computer program embodied thereon for
2 providing online presence information, the computer program comprising instructions for
3 causing a computer to perform the following operations:

4 maintain a list of people known to a user;
5 access online presence information for the user;
6 determine a potential receiver of the online presence information;
7 compare the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the potential
8 receiver is included on the list; and
9 determine whether to communicate the online presence information to the potential
10 receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.

1 24. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine to not communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver when the potential receiver is not included
5 in the list.

1 25. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to an instant messaging application of the potential receiver.

1 26. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information on a web page.

1 27. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information in member search results.

1 28. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises

3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to display the online presence
4 information in a member profile.

1 29. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver when a request for online presence
5 information is received from the potential receiver.

1 30. The medium of claim 23 wherein, to determine whether to communicate the online
2 presence information to the potential receiver, the computer program further comprises
3 instructions for causing the computer to determine whether to communicate the online
4 presence information to the potential receiver absent a request from the potential receiver
5 for the online presence information.

1 31. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:
3 infer that a person is known to the user based on positive user actions related to e-
4 mail communications from the person;
5 add the inferred person to the list.

1 32. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include sending an e-mail to the
2 person.

1 33. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include replying to, forwarding,
2 saving, or printing an e-mail received from the person.

1 34. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive actions include moving an e-mail from
2 a first folder to a second folder.

1 35. The medium of claim 34 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second
2 folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

1 36. The medium of claim 31 wherein the positive action includes leaving an e-mail from
2 the person open for a predetermined period of time.

1 37. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:
3 inferring that a person is known to the user based, at least in part, on detecting a
4 communication between the user and the person;
5 adding the inferred person to the list.

1 38. The medium of claim 37 wherein the communication is an instant messaging
2 communication.

1 39. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to infer that a person is known to the user and
3 wherein, to infer that a person is known to the user the computer program further
4 comprises instructions for causing the computer to:
5 access a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list;
6 and
7 access a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first
8 contact's contact list.

1 40. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to infer that a person is known to the user based, at
3 least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that otherwise are used
4 to infer a person is known to the user.

1 41. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 report a communication from the person as spam.

1 42. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 add a person to a blacklist.

1 43. The medium of claim 40 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
2 move a communication from the person to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

1 44. The medium of claim 23 wherein the computer program further comprises
2 instructions for causing the computer to:
3 enable the user to expressly designate a person as known to the user; and
4 add the designated person to the list.

1 45. An apparatus for providing online presence information:
2 means for maintaining a list of people known to a user;
3 means for accessing online presence information for the user;
4 means for determining a potential receiver of the online presence information;
5 means for comparing the potential receiver to the maintained list to determine if the
6 potential receiver is included on the list; and
7 means for determining whether to communicate the online presence information to
8 the potential receiver based on whether the potential receiver is included in the list.